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ABSTRACT

The paper reports on the first year of an eighth grade social studies unit, "Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior" (ED 152 670). The unit focuses on the question of individual responsibility in society. During the first year of the program, experimental and control groups were pre- and posttested in four domains: knowledge and understanding, interpersonal awareness, moral reasoning, and ego development. Results indicated that students using this unit increased their skills, knowledge, and level of reasoning about social and moral issues. They gained an understanding of decision making in a society and the range of activities of political groups, the ability to read graphs and tables, new vocabulary terms, and significant growth in interpersonal awareness. Additionally, teacher outcomes were an expanded teaching methodology and a modification of the role of auxiliary staff. Program outcomes included the establishment of a resource center, a draft of the curriculum, dissemination activities, and administrative reports. Three factors accounted for the program's success: the materials, which deal with real people and specific events; the classroom processes which are based on the developmental stages of junior high students; and the active participation of auxiliary staff -- an art teacher, librarian, counselor, and multicultural resource person. (KC)

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Teaching the Holocaust

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Paper Presented at
The Annual Meeting of
The American Educational Research Association

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The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Margot Strom, William Parsons, and Betty Bardige to several documents which have been summarized here.

"Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior" is a (ED 152 670) unique junior high school social studies unit written by two suburban Boston eighth grade teachers, Margot Stern Strom and William S. Parsons, and funded under ESEA Title IV-C. It is unique for the following four reasons: 1) The materials presented in films and readings are rarely, if ever, present in the typical eighth grade social studies course; 2) The classroom processes and teaching methodology are based on a cognitive-developmental and experiential theoretical framework usually found in some preschool curriculua, but almost never in junior high school; 3) The unit includes a dissemination model allowing for the active participation of auxillary staff -- an art teacher, a librarian, a counselor, and a multi-cultural resource person; and 4) It works. Each of these dimensions will be discussed in turn.

Two recent reviews of junior high school curricula or history textbooks (Roskies, 1975; Friedlander, 1973) showed elaborate accounts of World War II battles and political issues, but almost no mention of the ghettos, deportation and death experienced by more than six million human beings. Roskies describes one curriculum as a compilation of facts as if history had to happen that way. There were far too many answers and far too few questions. Since then, several Holocaust curricula have been produced, mostly in the form of readings for both Jewish and public education.

The unit is developmental in two ways. First, it follows the theories of Dewey, Piaget, and others in that it seeks to foster development through the introduction of intellectual conflict and resolution in an active, involved experience. Second, it takes into account the stage of development

of junior high school students, and makes connections between the subject matter and students' lives and concerns.

The unit begins with a forthright discussion of why students are being asked to study the Holocaust and why most teachers and textbooks avoid this painful subject. The students feel that this discussion is a powerful message of respect, that they are being admitted to the adult world and entrusted with its secrets. The classroom climate reinforces this equality between teacher and students and encourages them to express their opinions, knowing they will be heard respectfully. Students respond with increasing involvement and maturity.

Materials are designed for students entering the stage of early formal operations. They deal with real people and specific incidents. Students are asked to coordinate the different perspectives of victim, victimizer, leader, resister, and bystander. In trying to make sense out of discrepant events, they debate interpretations and avoid overly simple explanations. The appreciation of multiple causality is an important goal of the unit. Eventually, students see their discussions focusing on issues or questions rather than facts.

A central issue is the question of individual responsibility in and for society. While this might be thought as too sophisticated for an eighth grade student, the issues are already in their minds. They see society as a large group and struggle daily with group issues, such as when to go along and when to resist, what they and their group believe in, when to betray their values for the group and vice versa, what risks they are willing to take.

Continual use of terms like society, individual, obedience, authority, responsibility and prejudice, whose meanings develop during the course helps students to make connections between different parts of the unit and to relate it to events in their lives. History is presented as a tool for understanding human behavior, for discussions about Nazi tryanny are also about what happens in the school cafeteria and students bring their own examples of peer group pressure to bear on stories about Germans who become Nazi soldiers.

The unit avoids traps involved in teaching such highly charged material by carefully preparing students to make sense out of readings or films that may be moving, frightening or shocking. They are given opportunities to share and build on each others feelings, to talk about the issues and grapple with the questions.

While students at this point in development could easily identify with the aggressor and see the course as a way to manipulate power for self protection or enhancement, the focus on community and responsibility with an emphasis on first person accounts presenting many perspectives make this likelihood minimal.

To broaden students' experiences beyond the social studies classroom, other school personnel were brought into the program. Project staff presented an in-service training workshop for an art teacher, a counselor, a librarian and a multi-cultural teacher. They attended meetings with lecturers such as Dr. Erich Goldhagan from the Harvard Divinity School and Dr. James Herzog, a child psychiatrist, where issues and concerns about implementing the curriculum were raised and discussed. Throughout the

school year, these people presented workshops for their respective colleagues throughout the school district where interest and support for the project was generated. Music programs and the development of lessons on propaganda, posters and monuments were integrated into the students' classroom experience while many from the guidance and multi-cultural staff attended classes and participated in discussions.

The evaluation of the first year's activities centered on two main areas; 1) teacher and student behavior, and 2) the extent to which information about the unit was disseminated to other teachers, auxillary staff, administrators and the public at large. The design of the evaluation most closely resembles that proposed by Stake (Stake, 1967) which studies the rationale, but focuses on antecedents, transactions, and outcomes. In addition, three types of personnel were considered; students, teachers and project staff, creating a nine-cell table for which objectives were formulated, measuring instruments or techniques devised, and results noted.

Project antecedents included administrative support, existing resources, the stage of developmental psychology, and evidence of feasibility from pilot activities. Student antecedents were sufficient reading skills to comprehend the materials provided. Teacher antecedents included expertise in developmental education, and for the extended staff, a demonstrated interest in the project by attending conferences, reviewing materials, and suggesting additional resources to project staff.

Project processes involved the hiring of personnel and consultants; giving workshops for the extended staff; producing a curriculum guide; creating a resource center; dissemination to parents, the community at

large, administrators and professional organizations; establishing relations with other cultural institutions. Student processes included: actively participating in class discussions; completing written assignments; reporting incidents in and out of school related to issues raised in class; evaluating the curriculum guide by expressing what they thought were the strengths and weaknesses of the program and giving their reactions to films, readings, etc. Teacher processes included: showing films and assigning readings; providing a supportive atmosphere in the classroom; incorporating language and school skills into the unit; encouraging intellectual growth by eliciting questions, clarifications and elaborations beyond the recall of specific facts; generating appropriate cognitive conflict and resolution by pointing out various points of view or positions in a social or moral dilemma; challenging students to use abstract concepts and terms.

Project outcomes include the establishment of a resource center; a draft of the curriculum including teacher methodology and students readings; a record of meetings, dissemination activities, workshops and administrative support; a tie with the Armenian community to include the circumstances surrounding another example of genocide; videotapes of speakers, survivors, workshops and classroom discussions. Teacher outcomes were an expanded teaching methodology to include techniques of developmental education; a modification of the role of the extended staff, workshops run by extended staff for their respective colleagues in library, counseling and art. Student outcomes included an understanding of decision-making in a society and the range of activities of political groups; the ability to read graphs and tables for information, trends, minimums and maximums; incorporation of new terms into their active vocabulary (e.g., scapegoat, propaganda, anti-

Semite, etc.); growth in ego, social and moral development indicating more complex reasoning ability in these domains.

A variety of forms of documentation were gathered to show the presence of project, teacher and student antecedents. These included letters and memos from administrators, records of workshops and conferences, and scores from reading tests administered the previous year.

Processes were recorded by the documentarian, especially with regard to dissemination, while logs kept by the teachers and data from classroom observation instruments showed the desired processes to be taking place, including student participation, a supportive atmosphere and an intellectually challenging discussion format.

Specific categories employed in observing videotapes of classroom discussion included: establishing the classroom atmosphere; incorporating language skills; eliciting questions, past events, clarification, opinions and reasoning; encouraging perspective taking; relating other experiences and lessons to this lesson; eliciting definitions or the use of abstract terms; generating conflict in discussions.

Frequency counts of behaviors or communications were combined with holistic judgments to determine the degree to which an appropriate discussion was actually taking place. It is this area where the line between transactions and outcomes becomes blurred, since many things said by some pupils or the teacher would constitute outcomes for them, but provide the means for other students to change their concept or reasoning of the issue at hand.

Outcomes of the project include the establishment of a resource center, a draft of the curriculum guide, slide presentations prepared by

the art teacher, audio and video tapes of speakers and survivors, an established tie with the Armenian community (membership on the advisory council, books and films on the Armenian genocide) and the first steps in establishing a permanent Holocaust center.

Teachers did expand their techniques to include the developmental education methods of introducing cognitive conflict and resolution. Other eighth grade teachers expressed a willingness to teach the unit next year and looked forward to working more closely with the extended staff in art, library and counseling. Extended staff gave workshops to their colleagues and contributed names of books, films, survivors, and scholars on the Holocaust for possible inclusion in the curriculum or the resource center.

During the first year of the project, the two authors taught the unit in their own schools. Since there was evidence from standardized test score data that there were ability (as measured in reading achievement) differences between the two schools, a control class from each was chosen in which another unit from the eighth grade curriculum was taught.

Both experimental and control classes were pre- and post-tested in four domains: knowledge and understanding of concepts and vocabulary; interpersonal awareness (Selman, 1974); moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969) and ego development (Loevinger, 1966).

A word about "history" as a threat to the internal validity of this evaluation design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) is in order. The television series on the Holocaust was aired some weeks after the unit ended in the schools and after the post-tests were administered. In addition, record breaking snowstorms in January and February, 1978 in Boston caused suspension

of classes for more than a week, but the effects were judged to be minimal.

The results of the social studies concepts, skills and vocabulary test showed the experimental group growing more in attaining these goals than the control group, especially in describing decisions made by individuals as members of a society. Large numbers of students in the unit classes were able to give adequate definitions or examples of vocabulary words, though there were some interesting confusions, such as Aryans and Armenians (terms probably never mentioned in the same class) and many students identified Nazis as soldiers, rather than members of a political party.

Two of the developmental measures allowed both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Both interpersonal awareness and moral reasoning have continuous counterparts to their stage determination. In these scales, 100 corresponds to a pure Stage One response, 150 corresponds to a transitional state between Stages One and Two, etc.

Students in the program classes grew more on both measures than did students in the control classes. An analysis of covariance with posttest score as the dependent variable and reading level and pretest score as the dependent variable and reading level and pretest score as covariates was performed once the assumptions had been shown to hold for this data. The program group grew statistically significantly more in interpersonal awareness, mostly from Stage Two to a transitional state between Stage Two and Three, while the growth in moral reasoning over the control group could have been attributed to chance.

To respond to the concerns of developmental psychologists that continuous measures and aggregate scores such as the mean offer little infor-

mation that is useful to them, two qualitative analyses were performed which used proportions of subjects at each stage on both groups on both testings as the data. Then, by comparing cumulative distributions with the well known but seldom employed Kolmogorov-Smirnov non-parametric two sample test, the same hypotheses may be tested using procedures which maintain the integrity of the data. This analysis was performed on the global stage scores of each of the three developmental measures but only interpersonal awareness retained the significant difference favoring the program group.

Significant growth over that of the control group is evidenced in several issues within interpersonal awareness. Rule Orientation, Decision-Making/Organization, Leadership, Jealousy/Exclusion, Conflict Resolution, Termination and Gobal Score all showed more subjects in the experimental group reasoning at a more complex level, than in the control group.

A second analysis was performed to determine the proportion of subjects in both groups who showed a new stage of reasoning on the posttest not present in the pretest. Here, too, there were several issues in interpersonal awareness where growth in the experimental groups exceeds the control group students.

Finally, an analysis of papers describing students' experiences in the unit, written after the unit ended, revealed much evidence of an understanding of more than one perspective on a dilemma, the ability to put oneself in another position, an ability to draw analogies in school life to the content in the unit, changes of attitudes toward minority groups, reduction of stereotyping, increased interest in personal histories of parents and grandparents, awareness of cultural differences, and a willing-

ness to express ideas in class without fear of ridicule. These themes were present in several students' papers and showed a sophistication not displayed in the other instruments.

As a result of workshops run by the two teacher-authors, sufficient interest has been generated in the district that in the summer of 1978, all eighth grade social studies teachers, and the librarians, art teachers, etc., from each school participated in the project by including the unit in the social studies curriculum during the 1978-1979 academic year.

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Table 1

Proportions of Students at Each Stage

	PRE				POST			
Interpersonal Awareness								
	1(2)	2	2(3)	3	1(2)	2	2(3)	3
EXP	.02	.36	.42	.20	.04	.11	.58	.27
CONT	.00	.38	.53	.10	.05	.38	.43	.14
Moral Judgment								
	2	2(3)	3	3(4)	2	2(3)	3	3(4)
EXP	.00	.43	.41	.16	.03	.21	.65	.11
CONT	.00	.33	.47	.20	.00	.33	.53	.14
Ego Development								
	Δ	Δ/3	3	3/4	Δ	Δ/3	3	3/4
EXP	.24	.10	.54	.12	.14	.18	.52	.16
CONT	.20	.33	.47	.00	.03	.17	.77	.03

Note: Each group contained approximately 40 children.